The Impact of Puritanism on the Cultural Circles in England (1649-1660)

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أثر البيوريتانية على الأوساط الثقافية في إنجلترا (١٦٤٩-١٦٦٠)

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الملخص

البيوريتانية حركة دينية بروتستانتية راديكالية نشأت في إنجلترا في أواخر القرن السادس عشر بهدف الإصلاح الديني وتخليص الكنيسة الإنجليزية من بقايا الكاثوليكية. أدى انتشار أفكارها وتزايد نفوذها إلى اندلاع الحرب الأهلية في إنجلترا، وسيطرت على مقاليد الحكم لمدة عشر سنوات تقريبًا (١٦٤٩-١٦٦٠). تميزت هذه الحركة بالتعصب الديني الصارم ووضع قواعد أخلاقية للسلوك، خاصة بعد توليها السلطة في إنجلترا بقيادة الجنرال أوليفر كرومويل، حيث تم إغلاق المسارح وأماكن الترفيه، وصبغت البلاد باللون الداكن. وقد ظهر الصراع في البداية جمهوريا ملكيا أو بروتستانتيا كاثوليكيا، لكنه سرعان ما تحول إلى صراع بين الشعب المؤيد للملكية والسلطة الجديدة التي ساندت الفكر الديني المتطرف الذي مثله الناس الذين تمردوا على سلطة رجال الدين أو الكنيسة الأنجليكانية.يسعى هذا البحث إلى معرفة أسباب التطرف الديني في إنجلترا أثناء نشوء ونشأة وانتشار الحركة البيوريتانية وتأثيرها على الأوساط الثقافية في ذلك الوقت حيث أيد أفكارها عدد من الشعراء الإنجليز مثل: جون ميلتون، وتوماس جراي، وفيليب سيدني، وعارضها آخرون وهم: ويليام شكسبير، وكريستوفر مارلو، وبن جونسون. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** البيوريتانية، التطرف الديني، الكنيسة الأنجليكانية، الأدب الإنجليزي، جون ميلتون، ويليام شكسبير.

Abstract

Puritanism was a radical protestant religious movement that originated in England in the late sixteenth century with the goal of religious reform and to rid the English church of the remains of Catholicism. The spread of its ideas and the rise of its influence led to the outbreak of civil war in England, and it took control of the reins of government for almost ten years (1649-1660).This movement was characterized by strict religious intolerance and established ethical rules of conduct, especially after taking control of England led by General Oliver Cromwell, where the theatres and entertaining places were blocked, and the dark colour painted the country. The conflict appeared republicanroyal or Protestant-Catholic at first, but soon turned into a conflict between the people supporting the monarchy and the new authority that supported the extremist religious thought which was represented by people who rebelled against the authority of the clergymen or the Anglican Church.This paper seeks to know the causes of religious extremism in England during the emergence, origin, and spread of the puritan movement and its impact on the cultural circles at the time where its ideas were supported by a number of English poets such as: John Milton, Thomas Gray and Philip Sydney, and opposed by others, namely, William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Ben Johnson.**Keywords:** Puritanism, religious extremism, Anglican Church, English literature, John Milton, William Shakespeare.

1. History of Puritanism

Puritanism generally refers to moral, religious and spiritual ideas and practices as well as physical purification. Puritanism is characterized by strictness, asceticism, hardness, perfection, virtue, holiness, tyranny and inclusiveness. Max Weber emphasizes this sense of stiffness in most religions starting with Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism and Christianity, and ending with Islam. Even the pre-Christian community of Pharisees can be counted within this puritanical trend.[1]Puritanism, in particular, is protestant puritanism that flourished in England in the sixteenth century and culminated in the seventeenth century when it took power

in England for ten years, some of whom immigrated to America and founded what is known as New England.The religious reform movement began with the ideas of john Wyclif (1320-1384), a pastor and professor at the university of oxford, before John Hoss and martin Luther, including the call for the separation of the English church from the Roman church, the abolition of the intermediary between the individual and his lord, confiscating of church property, and the belief in predestination which was embraced by puritans and reformers: Huldrych Zwingli, Martin Luther, and John Calvin.[2] In the sixth volume of his book The Story of Civilization, devoted to the study of the religious reform movement, Will Durant stated: "All the major elements of the Reformation were in Wyclif:the revolt against the worldliness of the clergy, and the call for a sterner morality; the return from the Church to the Bible, from Aquinas to Augustine, from free will to predestination, from salvation by works to election by divine grace; the rejection of indulgences, auricular confession, and transubstantiation; the deposition of the priest as an intermediary between God and man; the protest against the alienation of national wealth to Rome; the invitation to the state to end its subordination to the papacy; the attack (preparing for Henry VIII) on the temporal possessions of the clergy."[3]In spite of the Church's control of both houses of Parliament, the Lollard sect, which owes allegiance to Wyclif's concepts of Puritanism, was able to present a statement to the Parliament in 1395 explaining its principles:"They opposed clerical celibacy, transubstantiation, image worship, pilgrimages, prayers for the dead, the wealth and endowment of the Church, the employment of ecclesiastics in state offices, the necessity of confession to priests, the ceremonies of exorcism, and the worship of the saints."[4]In other statements, they emphasized the supremacy of the Bible over the teachings and decrees of the Church. They rejected the war as anti-Christian and called for simplicity in food and clothing. Thus, Puritanism took shape in England by embodying and embracing these principles.[5] Encyclopedia Britannica defines Puritanism as "a religious reform movement in the late 16th and 17th centuries that sought to 'purify' the Church of England of remnants of the Roman Catholic 'popery' that the Puritans claimed had been retained after the religious settlement reached early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. "[6] The separation of the English Church from the Roman Catholic Church began in 1534 under the reign of King Henry VIII, and the rise of Protestantism was accelerated under the reign of King Edward VI (1547-1553). But Roman Catholicism regained influence in England during the reign of Queen Mary (1553-1558). Many Protestants were exiled outside the country, where they found refuge in the Calvinist Church in Geneva.[7] This period and subsequent periods were marked by religious persecution among rival sects depending on who ascends the throne to exercise his persecution against those who oppose him. A series of sectarian retaliation in the history of Europe has been the result of long-standing sectarian persecution between Catholics and Protestants. In his book, The Story of Civilization, Durant notes that:"all the inhumanity that was to be visited by Catholics upon the Protestants of France in 1680-90 was visited by Protestants upon the Catholics of Ireland in 1650-60. Catholicism became an inseparable part of Irish patriotism because the Church and the people were fused in a community of suffering. Those bitter years remained in Irish memory as an undying heritage of hate."[8] The spread of Calvinism in England has had a major impact on the popularity of the Puritan movement. Two important books in promoting the influence of this movement, Geneva Bible and John Foxe's Book of Martyrs, have also contributed to the promotion of religious reform. The accession of Queen Elizabeth I to power in 1558 was an indicator for Protestants to begin religious reform, but the reforms of the Queen were not as ambitious as their quest was for the overall reform of the Church. Thus the Puritans went to other circles outside the church and they found supporters for their cause in parliament and universities such as Oxford and Cambridge.[9] After the rise of King James I, who believed in Calvinism and succeeded Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, the Puritans did not have the opportunity to obtain certain positions and they were suppressed during the reign of King Charles I (1625-1649).[10] However, Puritanism had spread until it had the opportunity to invade the monarchy that failed to complete the reform of the church when the civil war between the supporters of Parliament and the supporters of King Charles I (1640-1649) broke out and it supported the Parliament against the monarchy.[11] The Puritans were known during the 17th century that they embodied the distilled essence of the moral and religious seriousness that characterized their way of life. They sought to reform the church to make their lifestyle a pattern for the entire nation. Their efforts to change the life style of the nation led into a civil war in England and the establishment of colonies in the United States, which adopted the Puritan style as a model in life.In France, Cornelius Jansen adopted an extreme style similar to that of the Puritans in his anti-Jesuit call, a sect that supports property in France in its moderate Catholic direction. The persecution of the Huguenots by the authority of King Louis XIV was followed by the outbreak

of sectarian wars between the Catholics and the Protestants until they encompassed the low lands and Europe as a whole.

2. The Impact of Puritanism on the Cultural Scene in England:

Literature and art were not preferred by the Puritans because they believed that these two spheres opened up the door for earthly pleasures that they tried to limit in favor of interest in the Bible and its teachings. However, there are those who are interested in the literature of the Puritans such as John Bunyan and his book Pilgrim's Progress and John Milton and his book Paradise Lost as examples of the many literary works that presented figures of the reformed Christian faith in the seventeenth century. A Puritan can be defined in this sense is a person with a sincere faith who is more willing to reform the Church and the ethics of the individual.[12] John Milton was not an ultra-Puritan but he was a moderate figure who loved music and advocated and defended Puritanism. The Puritans, on the other hand, went beyond his failings in order to support them. His book Eikonoklastes (i.e. the image breaker) was useless to refute John Gauden's book A Royal Portrait in which he supported the royal vision of power.[13]The theaters were closed at the height of Puritanism in England in 1642 because of the war and were opened only in 1656 because the Puritans did not favor it.[14] Hence the playwrights cursed the Puritans where they attacked their way of life and their ideas cynically and exaggeratedly, and they did not recognize the essence of the puritanical reform, especially that the court was sponsoring these playwrights and their teams; therefore, they defended the view of the Royal Power.[15]William Shakespeare, whose family was Catholic, attacked the Puritan style of religiosity and life in his play Twelfth Night, which at the beginning of the seventeenth century foretold the rise of Puritanism to power, and that was what happened 50 years later. Shakespeare foreshadowed this event through his puritan character "Malvolio", when he promised to avenge his humility after discovering the game played by the rulers who showed him a person aspiring to reach the ruling class illegally. Maria, his colleague, described him frankly as "a kind of Puritan", then she identified him with the devil: "the devil a Puritan that he is"(2.3.142-44). However, in his article "Shakespeare and Puritanism", James Westfall Thompson explains the contrast between two cultures at the time in this context; Puritanism versus Renaissance:"The refined and half Italian culture of Olivia is contrasted with the narrow and bigoted ideals of Malvolio, who is a Puritan. For the Puritans looked upon the culture of the Italian Renaissance then flowing into England like a floodas half pagan and half Catholic, and frivolous dalliance to boot."[16] In his play Measure for Measure, Shakespeare depicts the Puritan character Angelo sarcastically, showing the hypocrisy of this character as he is morally strict in appearance but inherently corrupt. He prevented sexual relations outside the legal framework when he took power in Vienna, but he offered the exchange of having sex with the accusers for their release. Thompson comments on the theme of this play and its relation with Puritanism: "The collapse of the virtuous Angelo is the direct theme of Measure for Measure. But the indirect and implied theme is the injustice, the futility, the uncharitablness, the hypocrisy, of Puritanism."[17] As in The Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's expectations in Measure for Measure indicated that the Puritans would take over the government in England for a temporary period but they could not rule properly. The Duke handed over his power to the Puritan character Angelo and disguised as a monk to watch how these extremists ruled the people and conducted their affairs. Shakespeare sided with the monarchy in this play because the Duke shows that he is achieving justice in his town after these Puritans have corrupted it. In Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing, there are only implicit hints criticizing Puritanism such as in this dialogue between Dogberry and Leonato:"Leon.: I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.Dogb.: Your worship speaks like a most thankful and reverend youth; and I praise God for you.Leon.: There's for thy pains. Dogb.: God save the foundation!" 5. 2. 10-15).Thompson refers that the word "foundation" means the "Puritan State", as it was the ambition of those extremists to erect according to the Calvinistic belief. 18 The major theme of the play is virginity and honour, which constitutes a significant part of the Puritanical thinking. Some writers have hinted at the Puritans such as Christopher Marlowe by the word "precisian", which means the person who deals with problems or texts literally in Wagner's speech in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: "I will set my countenance like a precisian and begin to speak thus.And so the Lord bless you, preserve you, and keep you,my dear brethren, my dear brethren" (1.2. 24-26).This is an accusation against the Puritans that they adhere to the texts of the Bible literally and do not take the essence of these texts in consideration. This accusation is right as they reject the ecclesiastical interpretations of the texts of the Bible, especially the Old Testament and adhere to their own interpretations that fit their ideology. Perhaps the secret of their focus on the Old Testament is that this book contains a regulatory basis for life according to their religious perspective.In his poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," Thomas Gray referred to three Puritan figures: Oliver Cromwell, the leader

of the Revolution against the monarchy, John Hampden, a politician who refused to pay the tax to King Charles I, and the poet John Milton. He referred to them in a way that glorifies their memory and attacks the aristocratic and royal classes. This positive characterization of the Puritan symbols indicates a sympathetic attitude of the poet Gray with the Puritan movement and its ideas, especially in the political sphere, because it calls for a social and political system that is very close to the socialist system, the atmosphere suggested by this poem. The poet Philip Sydney was influenced by Puritan thought with a single poem "Leave me, O Love," where the speaker leaves physical love and satirizes it because the destiny of the body is dust and destruction, while the soul's destiny is to heaven and eternity. This notion is in harmony with the Puritans' ideas that they regard women as a source of evil and a goal to seduce men. But these Puritanical ideas do not resonate with the rest of the poet's work. In his play Bartholomew Fair, Ben Jonson presents Busy, a Puritan character, as a lustful and hypocrite person. In addition to these abhorrent features of the Puritans, which are depicted by the writer, other features have been added which belong to the nature of their worship and rituals as they deviate from the norm. The Puritans have been openly attacked by at least sixty plays and more suggestively.[19] In general, the playwrights found in the exaggerated behavior of Puritanism a material of irony and mockery for not being consistent with the system of values and norms in the English society at the time. They accused the Puritans of moral hypocrisy, extremism in worship, lechery, gluttony, and other features. Whether these features are real or not, they reflect hatred left by the Puritans in the minds of their opponents among intellectuals, and the depth of change that the Puritans wanted to bring about in the structure of English society.

3. Conclusion:

The Religious Reform Movement in England and Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a Protestant movement opposed to the Roman Catholic Church, which called for the rejection of idolatry, the reduction of the clergy's acquisition of public property, the abolition of mediation between the individual and his Lord, the austerity of life, the interpretation of the Bible by the clergymen is unreliable , the adoption of the philosophy of predestination rather than the free will of the Catholic Church and the call for the establishment of a moral system based on strict religious grounds. This movement has gained widespread popularity in England and some European countries because it opposes the monarchical power, the church that supports this power, and the feudal authority that consolidates it. Therefore, a conflict was ignited between two fronts in which social strata are drawn into a war that is apparently religious but essentially economic. The Catholic Church has adopted an arbitrary method of curbing its opponents, accusing them of heresy, while the Protestant Church has adopted the same method of abuse of its Catholic opponents. Puritanism emerged from the womb of Protestantism and called for strict adherence to religious principles. The religious persecution practiced by Catholics against the Puritans was reflected in the practices of the Puritans when they took power in England against the Catholics, creating a series of almost endless wars and reprisals. Literature and art were not favored by the Puritans unless the literary work serves their religious principles. They had writers and poets such as John Bunyan, John Milton, and others who were influenced by such principles as Thomas Gray and Philip Sydney. However, the reaction against the Puritan faith was much greater than the trend in favor of it because this movement was hostile to everything that is worldly or entertaining or any practice that does not put religion in its positive form within its scope. Thus, many writers such as: Shakespeare, Marlowe and Ben Johnson launched to attack and ridicule its principles. In The Twelfth Night, Shakespeare depicted Malvolio, the Puritan character, ironically as the person who aspires to change his social reality in crooked way. In Measure for Measure, Shakespeare also showed the Puritan character, Angelo, as a hypocrite opportunist who could not govern well when he had the chance to govern. Shakespeare's predictions in both plays had confirmed that the Puritans would take power and avenge their enemies, but fail to govern and lose power soon after. That was what happened in England 50 years later after the two plays had been written. Marlowe criticized the literal way by which the Puritans interpreted the Bible, while Ben Johnson, in his play Bartholomew Fair showed Busy, the Puritan character, as a morally hypocritical figure, as Shakespeare did with the aforementioned Angelo character. The writers and poets who supported Puritanism and its ideas, which called for religious and social reform, were not numerous including John Bunyan in his book Pilgrim's Progress, John Milton in Paradise Lost and Thomas Gray in his poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," where the poet glorified some Puritan personalities including Oliver Cromwell and John Milton, and called for a system in which classes would vanish and thus contradict the English society which was built on solid class foundations. As well as the poet Philip Sydney in his poem "Leave me, O love", in which the speaker favoured spiritual love and devaluated physical love as the Puritans believed.

Notes

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13. Durant, The Story of Civilization, The Age of Louis xiv, p. 184.
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